



CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
Department of Toxic Substances Control

PRESS RELEASE

T – 23 – 07

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 12, 2007**

DTSC Investigation Reveals Excessive Lead in Children's Jewelry

SACRAMENTO – The California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) today released a list of 16 children's jewelry items found in recent investigations to contain excessive lead levels. Parents and caregivers of children are urged to be extra alert when youngsters are wearing or playing with children's jewelry.

Items exceeding the legal limit include a "Molly 'N Me" necklace, a "Best Friends Two" bracelet, and various children's necklaces, rings and other items purchased at a wide range of California retail outlets. The lead-tainted jewelry was bought randomly by DTSC investigators at popular retail chains throughout the state, including Macy's, Dollar Tree, and GAP Kids.

DTSC has notified the owners of stores inspected and urged them to immediately remove items identified with high lead levels from their store shelves. Retailers are being cooperative and are working with DTSC officials to identify distributors to ensure items do not end up back in stores.

"Exposure to excessive amounts of lead poses serious health risks to children" said DTSC Director Maureen Gorsen, whose office is responsible for regulating lead in children's jewelry. "Lead in toy jewelry is a particular concern because children often place jewelry in their mouths."

DTSC tested the children's jewelry as part of the Department's enforcement of a new California law that went into effect this year on Sept. 1, 2007 to protect young Californians from excessive exposure to lead in children's jewelry that is sold to state residents. Individuals who manufacture, ship, sell or offer for retail sale children's jewelry for retail sale in California, including stores, catalogs, vending machines, and online sites, are regulated by DTSC effective September 1, 2007 under the California Lead-Containing Jewelry Law. The law limits lead content in metallic material in children's jewelry to 600 parts per million or less. Lead content in certain other components of children's jewelry is limited to 200 parts per million or less.

DTSC investigators purchased approximately 375 pieces of children's jewelry from a broad cross-section of California stores. Laboratory results on more than a third of the samples tested so far found a third of the children's jewelry items have higher lead content than the law allows. In one example, a children's jewelry pendant purchased out of a vending machine at a restaurant in Oakland was determined to contain 368,000 parts per million of lead – 613 times more than what the law allows.

Gorsen stressed that the majority of children's jewelry items tested by DTSC so far – about two thirds – meet the law's provisions.

(more)

“But it is difficult for a parent to know, based on just looking at a piece of jewelry, whether it could be harmful, especially if a little one puts it into his or her mouth, as children are sometimes apt to do,” she said.

Further, Gorsen advised that when older children take their jewelry items off, parents put the items in a safe place, away from the reach of younger children, particularly toddlers, who might pick up the small jewelry items and put them in their mouths. Additionally, broken children’s jewelry should be kept away from children, particularly if a protective coating over metal in the jewelry has been breached.

“We are protecting our most vulnerable citizens with this law. And, this is a good example of why we need to find ways to help ensure hazardous materials are not part of the manufacturing process”, said DTSC’s Gorsen. She is leading the state’s Green Chemistry Initiative, a multi-agency team that is exploring a different approach to environmental protection—transitioning away from managing toxic chemicals at the end of the lifecycle, to reducing or eliminating their use altogether.

For more information on the California Lead-Containing Jewelry Law and a complete list of the children’s jewelry items found to have excessive lead levels, visit DTSC’s Web site at <http://www.dtsc.ca.gov/LeadInJewelry.cfm>.

Consumers who have purchased the lead-laden items are urged to return them to retailers.

“We encourage consumers to return any of these products that made it onto DTSC’s list to the stores from which the items were purchased,” Gorsen said.

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The mission of the Department of Toxic Substances Control is to provide the highest level of safety, and to protect public health and the environment from toxic harm.